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Leadership From a Business Owner's Perspective

What three traits must you have in order to be a great leader?

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Yes, you and I have a great deal in common—we own our own business.

Which means that you and I have the same demands put upon us. The people whom we employ have a special need for us to put everything into perspective for them, in a way only you and I can be expected to do. After all, it's our business.

What are those special needs? What do employees expect from a leader? From the owner? From the CEO? From the boss?

Our people expect us to be:

Consistent. But you and I are almost always inconsistent. Having worked with thousands of business owners, I can safely say that most owners change their plan, their agenda, their mood almost daily.

We've got to understand what the word consistency means. We've got to look at our actions and ask ourselves if they're inconsistent or consistent, and if they are inconsistent, why are they inconsistent, and what can we do about it?

And in a world that's consistently inconsistent, how can we build a business which at its heart finds a true measure of consistency in everything it does? Wouldn't that be a miracle? Isn't that somehow impossible? Well, yes and no, but that's what a leader has to do. Find consistency in an inconsistent world. And reproduce it.

Determined. Yes, we're expected to be determined. No matter what you believe to the contrary, your people do want you to show them the evidence of your determination. Your determination to do what? To do what you say you're determined to do.

I think of the extraordinary leader, George Patton, or even the exceptional leader, Jack Kennedy. Patton not only said what he was going to do, he was absolutely, positively determined, come hell or high water, to do it. Most people would say he was a great leader because of his achievements, but that isn't necessarily true. Many great leaders have failed to do what they were determined to do, but because their determination was so alive, so clearly, passionately, convincingly true, whether they succeeded or not, they were a world-class leader. (Of course if you pull off what you're determined to do, it's a great plus.) Kennedy was determined to go to the moon. Churchill was determined to save the British Empire from the clutches of Germany. These men were determined. They were leaders. Everyone, when facing the stark reality of an impossible situation, needs someone who is determined to raise their level of determination, too.

Passionate. Yes, we've got to be consistent, determined and passionate. Which means we've got to care about what we do, deeply, lovingly, devotedly, compellingly, importantly...we've got to have a fever in our minds and hearts for the outcome, and for the process, and for the very fiber of what it is we intend to do and how it is we intend to do it and what difference that will make to everyone who comes into contact with our company, and our people.

But most important of all, think about the impact it will have for everyone who experiences our idea of a company, our idea of people, our idea of the importance of it all and the impact it will have on the world around it. Leaders are passionate people. They are not rational models of perfection, but they are consistent, determined, and passionate. And most of all, they take everything they do seriously. Seriously, as if it were a matter of life and death. And that's why people listen to them. And that's why people take them seriously.

And that's what it means...at least at random...and at least for a start...for you and I, as owners of our own business, to be leaders.

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